

## AMONG THE WATER FOWL

nearly always good, though it is apt to make the sea rough for boats. The gunners at Cape Sable, Nova Scotia, think that the first day of a southerly wind is one of the best times. Low temperature also helps to keep the fowl on the move. The worst weather for a flight is a pleasant, warm day, calm or with an off-shore wind. The time of the day is also a factor. The first two or three hours after dawn are the best. Often fowl fly well all the morning, but usually by noon, or at the latest the middle of the afternoon, the flight is about over, though occasional flocks may be seen till dusk.

Under the head of the Scoters, or "Coots," as the gunners call them, come three different sorts. The Surf Scoter is the commonest. The handsome black male, with white on the head, is popularly called the "Skunk-head Coot," as though it were a different species from its mate and young, which are known as the common "Gray Coot." Next in abundance is the "White-winged Coot," distinguishable by its larger size and white bar on each wing. The main plumage of the male is black, while the females and young are of a duller, more rusty hue. Last, yet fairly common, is the American or Black Scoter, nicknamed "Butter-bill Coot," on account of the conspicuous patch of yellow skin at the base of the bill, about the color of a lump of butter. It is only the male that has this and is thus named, its whole plumage being deep black. The female and young are confused with those of the Surf Scoter under the name of "Gray Coot." The best way to tell them apart—which very few gunners can do—is by the bill, the plumage being a good